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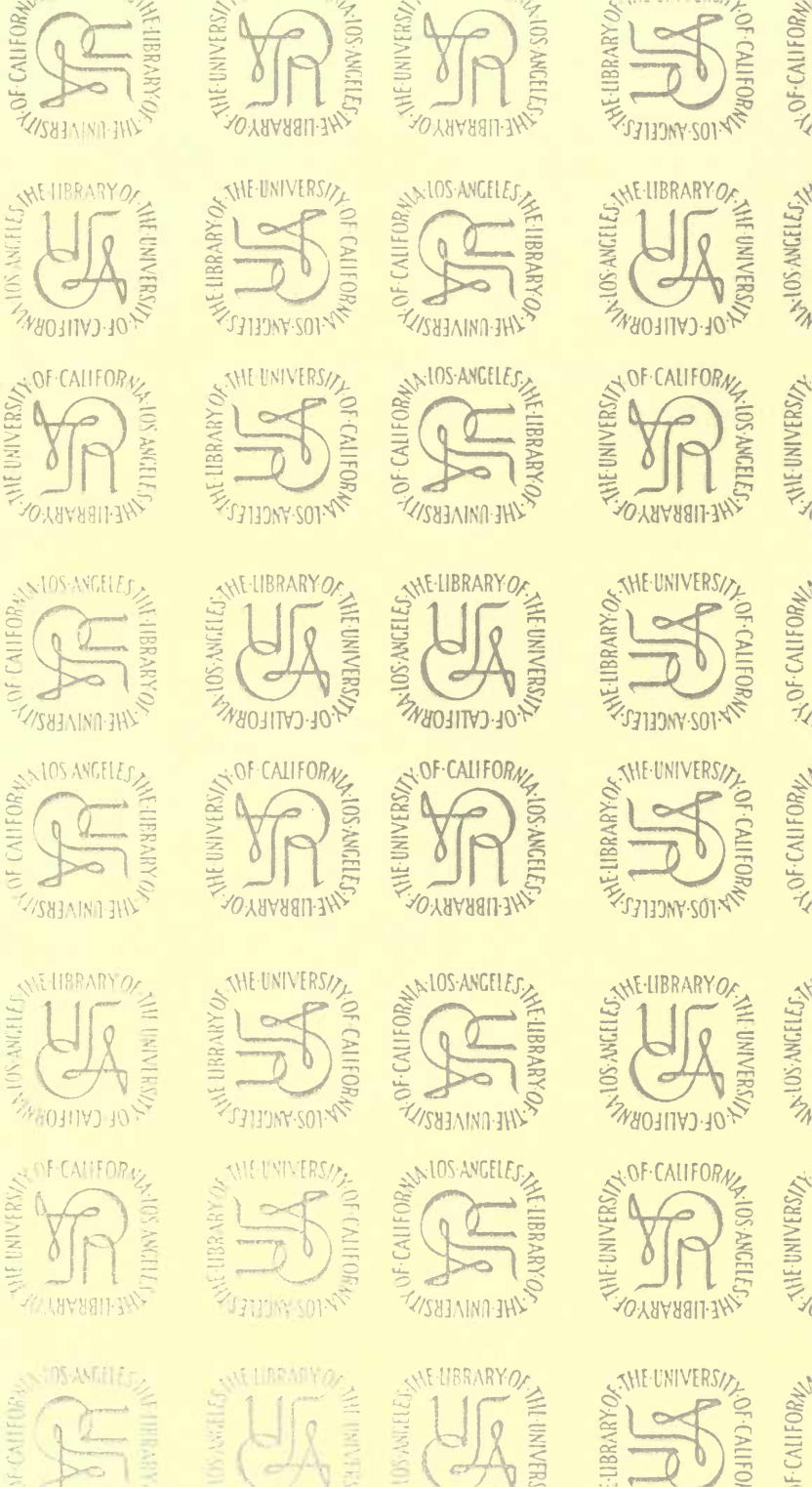
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A
LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

SAMUEL WHITBREAD, ESQ. M. P.

IN CONSEQUENCE OF

THE UNQUALIFIED APPROBATION

EXPRESSED BY HIM IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

OF

MR. LANCASTER'S SYSTEM OF EDUCATION,

&c.

LETTER

TO

SAMUEL WHITBREAD, ESQ. M. P.

IN CONNECTION

THE UNQUALIFIED ATROPHICATION

EXPERIENCED BY HIM IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

AND A COMPLETE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

A
LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

SAMUEL WHITBREAD, ESQ. M. P.

IN CONSEQUENCE OF
THE UNQUALIFIED APPROBATION
EXPRESSED BY HIM
IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
OF
MR. LANCASTER'S SYSTEM OF EDUCATION;
THE RELIGIOUS PART OF WHICH
IS HERE, SHEWN TO BE
INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE SAFETY
OF THE
Established Church,
AND, IN ITS TENDENCY,
SUBVERSIVE OF CHRISTIANITY ITSELF.

INCLUDING ALSO
SOME CURSORY OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
CLAIMS OF THE IRISH ROMANISTS,
AS THEY AFFECT THE
SAFETY OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

BY JOHN BOWLES, ESQ.

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1807.

LETTER

SAMUEL WINTHROP, ESQ. M.P.

THE UNQUALIFIED APPROBATION

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

MR. LANCASTER'S SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

THE READER OF WHICH

IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE SAFETY

OF THE

REPUBLICAN OR CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

SOME CORRECT OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

CLAIMS OF THE IRISH ROMANISTS

BY JOHN BOWEN

LETTER,

&c.

SIR,

As the grand design of education is to qualify youth for the stations which they are respectively to occupy in after-life, it may, I trust, be considered as a most auspicious circumstance for this country, that it is a prominent feature of the plan which you lately presented to the House of Commons for the regulation of the Poor Laws, to make the education of the children of the lower classes a national and a legislative object. I hope, Sir, that in the pursuit of this object you will have the true design of education, as above described, constantly in view, and make it your endeavour to furnish the inferior orders with such instruction, both in kind and degree, and no other, as will be calculated to render them useful members of society, in the humble rank in which it has pleased Providence to place them. But in the speech by which you introduced your proposed measure to the notice of Parliament, I saw something which I

cannot but consider as affording just cause for alarm. In that speech you are reported to have bestowed *unqualified* praise on Mr. Lancaster's system of education, and even to have expressed a hope that this system will *gradually be introduced into general practice*. The excellence of the mechanical part of this system, in affording most extraordinary facilities for instruction, no one is more disposed than myself to admit; though I must here be allowed to observe, that Mr. Lancaster strangely neglects to acknowledge the obligations which he is under to the Rev. Dr. Bell, who is certainly the parent of the system; and also that the very excellence of the system, in affording such facilities for instruction, seems to impose the necessity of great caution, lest it should operate as a *disqualification*, rather than a *qualification*, for the duties of the industrious poor. But the religious part of the system, which is almost the only part that Mr. Lancaster has not borrowed from Dr. Bell, I have long considered as liable to the most serious and weighty objections; and it is well known that persons of distinguished eminence for their talents and usefulness view it in the same light. It is true, you did not specifically advert to Mr. Lancaster's system of education, as it regards religion; but as you applied the term *bigotry* to those persons by whom it had been opposed, it must be presumed that you had in contemplation that part of it which relates to re-

ligious instruction, when you bestowed unqualified approbation upon the whole. I shall rejoice to find myself mistaken ; but as the subject is indisputably of the highest importance, it cannot be too seriously or deliberately considered ; and I should pay you but a very indifferent compliment if I thought any apology necessary for endeavouring by this address to fix it upon your attention, and that of the public, before you proceed farther in the great measure in which you are engaged. In the discussion upon which I am about to enter, I have only to request of those who may differ with me, that any reasonings may not be encountered by mere terms of reproach, as bigotry, prejudice, fanaticism, and the like, but only by proof, either that my principles and premises are erroneous, or that they do not authorize the conclusions which I may deduce from them.

The avowed object of Mr. Lancaster's plan, as it respects religion, is "*the formation of a society under whose patronage ALL the youth in these KINGDOMS may be instructed to read their BIBLES ; and to impress on their memories the knowledge of those most essential parts which relate to the history and theory of Christianity **." The society which he proposes to establish is to include all denominations of professing Christians. "*Let the*

* Page 187.

friends of youth," he says, "among every denomination of Christians exalt the standard of education." But a difficulty here naturally presents itself. As the different denominations of Christians entertain very different opinions on religious subjects, how can a society composed of all those denominations agree in a plan of religious instruction? Mr. Lancaster is fully aware of the difficulty, and he thus meets it: "Let me add, that a society for this purpose should be established on general Christian principles, and on them only. Mankind are divided into sects, and individuals think very differently on religious subjects, from the purest motives; and that gracious common Parent who loves all his children alike, beholds with approbation every one who worships him in sincerity. Yet it cannot be reasonably expected that conscientious men should promote a religious opinion directly contrary to their own. A Presbyterian, Baptist, Quaker, or any other, cannot with sincerity sacrifice his opinions to those of his amiable and Christian brethren in the establishment. Neither can the last conscientiously unite entirely in opinion with other denominations; but the grand basis of Christianity alone is broad enough for the whole bulk of mankind to stand on, and join hands as children of one family. This basis is 'Glory to God, and the increase of peace and 'good will amongst men' *." In thus describing

the grand basis of Christianity, Mr. Lancaster mistakes the effect for the cause. Glory to God and peace on earth ought certainly to result from Christianity, and they must result from it, if it be genuine. But they cannot with any propriety be called its ground-work or "basis." It appears, however, from the whole of the foregoing passage, that the method by which Mr. Lancaster proposes to unite all denominations of Christians, in a society for the education of youth, is to refrain from promoting, by means of such a society, any religious opinions which are peculiar to any of those denominations, or about which they differ, and to inculcate those only in which they all agree. For he says, "It cannot be reasonably expected that conscientious men should promote a religious opinion directly contrary to their own." In another part of his publication he says, "his object is to instruct youth in useful learning, in the leading and uncontroverted principles of Christianity." And he elsewhere * most explicitly and most emphatically lays it down as a kind of dogma, that "above all things education ought not to be subservient to the propagation of the peculiar tenets of any sect. Beyond the number of that sect," he adds, "it becomes undue influence, like the strong taking advantage of the weak." By which I understand him to mean, in reference to his own plan, that

although each sect, acting separately, may properly inculcate its own peculiar tenets, yet when all sects unite in a society for the purpose of education, they must act on what he calls "general Christian principles," and propagate no opinions which are peculiar to any sect, but only those which are common to all. In page 11 of his Introduction, Mr. Lancaster further says, "I long to see men who profess Christianity, contend, not for *creeds of faith*, or names, but in the practice of every heavenly virtue."

With Mr. Lancaster's religious opinions, or "creeds of faith," I have no right to meddle; but I consider myself not only entitled, but bound to say, that the system of religious instruction proposed by him is highly objectionable in a religious, a moral, and a political view. It leads to consequences of which, I should hope, Mr. Lancaster is not aware, and which, if he were aware of them, he would most earnestly deprecate. One of those consequences is, that his system, if universally adopted, would tend to the subversion of Christianity itself. Strong as this assertion may appear, I pledge myself to prove that it is well founded.

It will appear upon examination that all systems which in their nature and tendency are injurious to society, are founded in error. This is the case with that of Mr. Lancaster, which is evidently

built upon the supposition that *the different denominations of Christians differ only in the non-essentials, but agree in the essentials of Christianity.* This supposition is the basis of all his reasoning on the subject now under consideration. It is clearly implied in his general proposition that “the grand basis of Christianity alone is broad enough for the whole bulk of mankind to stand on;” and it appears more distinctly when he proposes it as one of the objects of his society to impress on the memories of youth the knowledge of those most essential parts which relate to the history and theory of Christianity *. Indeed, one would not willingly suppose that Mr. Lancaster would intentionally leave youth uninstructed in what he deems to be the essentials of Christianity. It must therefore be presumed that he considers the various denominations of Christians as agreeing in *essentials* and differing only in *non-essentials*. But in truth the very reverse of this is the case. The subjects upon which the various denominations of Christians differ, involve the very essentials of Christianity. They relate to matter of such high importance, that if all belief, and, consequently, all instruction, respecting them were excluded from a system of faith, that system could not in any sense of the word be denominated Christianity. A single example will suffice to prove the truth of this as-

sertion. It is well known that one of the principal differences which have agitated the Christian world relates to the blessed Founder of our religion, respecting whose person, character, and office, the most contradictory opinions have been strenuously maintained. Will Mr. Lancaster say that a person can be denominated a Christian who has no belief whatever respecting the points in dispute between the sects who hold different opinions on the above subject? But as Mr. Lancaster's proposed society is to consist of all denominations of Christians, and as it cannot be reasonably expected that "conscientious men should promote a religious opinion directly contrary to their own," it necessarily follows, according to such a scheme, that the Trinitarian doctrine upon the subject in question is not to be inculcated because it is "directly contrary" to that maintained by Socinians, and *vice versa*; and that, in relation to a matter which is palpably and necessarily fundamental in every possible system of Christianity, youth are not to form any belief whatever. But how can a person be called a Christian who has no opinion or belief on the question whether the Author of his religion is an object of his adoration? Nay, how is he to attend any place of Christian worship, if he is ignorant whether he is to worship the Son as well as the Father? In relation to this most important and interesting subject, Mr. Lancaster, as I think, most scripturally says, "To the

name of Jesus all must bow, in mercy or in judgment *." But the youth to be brought up by his society must not be taught *to bow to that name*; for, strange as it may appear, there is a sect of professing Christians who consider such adoration as idolatry. Indeed, all knowledge and belief upon the essential and fundamental doctrine above alluded to, must, according to his plan of education, be withheld from youth, in order that Trinitarians and Unitarians may unite in a society for general education.

In like manner most of the essential doctrines of Christianity have occasioned differences of opinion or belief, and excited controversy among professing Christians; and the ardour of the controversy has generally been in proportion to the supposed importance of the question in dispute. Upon all such doctrines, however, youth must remain totally uninstructed, if Mr. Lancaster's principle be carried into effect. But when, in conformity with that principle, he has excluded from his system of religious education all instruction upon subjects about which the various denominations of Christians differ, he will find that he has excluded Christianity itself: for the religion which will remain, when, in compliment to the numerous sects of professing Christians, all the

* Introduction, p. 11.

doctrines in which they do not agree are kept back, will certainly not be Christianity. It will indeed be scarcely any thing else than DEISM. I cannot conceive that any sect would, upon mature consideration, promote such a system of religious education. For persons of all sects, whatever their peculiar tenets may be, consider it a matter of indispensable necessity to form some belief on the subject of those tenets; and unless they were of opinion that salvation is confined to those of their own persuasion, they would rather see youth educated in a faith from which they differ, than in no faith at all; or which, with regard to Christian belief is the same thing, a faith in which all Christians agree. Thus it appears that the effect of Mr. Lancaster's system would be to make youth *Deists* rather than *Christians*; and that what he conceives to be *the broad basis of Christianity*, is, in reality, so narrow, that no Christian, of *any* sect or persuasion, can stand upon it.

If the mischievous effects of such a system were confined to the season of youth, the objections to it on the grounds above stated, would be insurmountable. For with regard to great numbers, youth is the only period of existence in this world, and it is impossible to say that it will not be so in any particular case. And who that is a Christian can reconcile himself to the thought, that this period should pass without any knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of

the Gospel—without any belief in those doctrines? But the influence of such a system upon those who are educated in it, must, in after-life, be of the most pernicious kind. The best that can be expected of such persons is, that they will not “hold fast” any form of doctrine—that they will never be firm, or steady, or long consistent, in any system of faith; and that through life they will be wavering and inconstant, and “blown about by every wind of doctrine.” But the danger, nay, the probability is, that, after many fluctuations, they will become sceptics, and, perhaps, complete infidels.

That one error is generally the parent of another, is a truth which is remarkably verified in Mr. Lancaster’s system. The fundamental error of that system, which consists in supposing that the various sects of professing Christians agree in essentials, and differ only in non-essentials, has led to a conclusion no less erroneous, that the plan of religious education which Mr. Lancaster proposes to adopt, will tend to produce the *moral* effects of Christianity. This is a position which he assumes, and on which he reasons with as much confidence as he could do if it were fully established. Thus, after laying down his grand principle, that “above all things education ought not to be subservient to the propagation of the peculiar tenets of any sect,” he says, “Yet a reverence

for the sacred name of God, and the Scriptures of truth; a detestation of vice; a love of veracity; a due attention to duties to parents, relations, and to society; carefulness to avoid bad company; civility without flattery; and a peaceable demeanour; may be inculcated in every seminary for youth, without violating the sanctuary of private religious opinion in any mind *.” He proceeds, “When obedience to the divine precepts keeps pace with knowledge in the mind of any man, that man is a Christian; and when the fruits of Christianity are produced, that man is evidently a disciple of our blessed Lord, let his profession of religion be what it may. The propagation of this knowledge, and the production of those fruits, increase the number of true Christians, which is far better than the increase of party to any extent; and at the same time proves beneficial to society, in the improved principle and conduct of its members; and in private life, by the steadiness and amiable disposition of parents, masters, and children, who are influenced by its mild and benignant precepts †.”

All this is undoubtedly very specious, and its speciousness has, I dare say, contributed much to the patronage which Mr. Lancaster has received from the friends of good morals. But it is altogether built upon fallacy. It is founded on the supposition that an effect may be produced without its appropriate cause. Mr. Lancaster says,

* Introduction, p. 9.

† Ib.

“When the fruits of Christianity are produced, that man is evidently a disciple of our blessed Lord.” But how are the fruits of Christianity to be produced, when the tree, of which those fruits are the natural product, is not planted? It is true, according to Mr. Lancaster’s system, a knowledge of the divine precepts is to be inculcated; for he says, “When obedience to those precepts keeps pace with knowledge in the mind of any man, that man is a Christian:” but he most unphilosophically, as well as most untheologically, expects “obedience” without the principle by which alone obedience can, in any case, be produced. That principle is faith. Lest the truth of this position should not be obvious to those who have paid but little attention to the subject, some illustration of it may not be amiss.

The obligation of all laws arises out of the relative situation of the legislators and those on whom the laws are obligatory. It does not consist merely in the right to impose penalties on disobedience, nor does it operate merely by the dread of those penalties. The conscientious mind will discover something which requires obedience to lawful authority, independently of all penalties, and even on the supposition that they may be evaded; it will discover that a right to command involves a corresponding duty to obey. But before the mind can be sensible of the obligation to obedience, it must believe two things: first, that there

exists, in the legislator, a right to command; and secondly, that this right has been exercised by the promulgation of certain commands, which thereby assume the force of laws. Such belief is but another term for faith. Thus it appears that faith is the vital principle of obedience, even in a state of human society. In such a state, however, the relation subsisting between those who have a right to command and those who are under an obligation to obey, though very extensive, is limited within certain bounds, and consequently the authority of the former and the duty of the latter are limited also; for with the relation the authority on the one side, and the obligation on the other, must be commensurate. But the relation which subsists between the Supreme Being and His creatures is unlimited, and therefore involves in it an unlimited right to command, and an unlimited obligation to obey. That inexpressibly great and glorious Being is the universal Creator. He made all things by his almighty Fiat. He gave them whatever form, nature, and qualities, he thought proper to bestow. They are all, collectively and individually, absolutely dependent upon Him in every moment of their existence. His will is, therefore, in all respects, their law. To that law, as far as relates to their *physical* existence, they are compelled to conform; a circumstance to which is owing the undeviating order, the harmony and regularity which reign throughout that immense and complicated machine, the physical

world. In the *moral* world the obligation to obedience is not less absolute, although the free agency, which is an essential attribute of moral beings, is necessarily accompanied with a power to disobey. Still, however, uniform and invariable obedience to the will of the Supreme Being is their indispensable duty—incapable, like the relation from which it flows, of any limitation ; a duty from which no possible situation or circumstances can absolve them, and the performance of which constitutes the very essence of virtue. In this case, as in every other, the principle of obedience is faith ; that is, according to the explanation already given, a belief that there exists an absolute universal right to command, which implies an unlimited obligation to obey, and also that this right has been exercised. A knowledge of every law, however, is an indispensable preliminary to obedience ; the obligation to the latter, therefore, necessarily implies the duty of endeavouring to obtain the former ; and thus we are bound to attend to every communication of the Divine will, our universal law, and to avail ourselves of every opportunity of making ourselves acquainted with it. The law which is written in our hearts, even if we had no other, should be carefully studied by us, for the hand which wrote it is Divine. But when an *express* revelation of the Divine Will has been made, our first duty, and that which is the basis of every other, is to endeavour, as far as our limited faculties will ex-

tend, to obtain a thorough acquaintance with it—not merely with the moral precepts by which we are commanded to regulate our practice, but with every thing which the Deity has been pleased to reveal to us respecting his own nature and attributes. Nothing that is thus revealed can be unimportant, and it would be the height of impiety so to consider any communication from God. In this view, faith or belief, independently of its being the only spring of obedience, is itself a *moral* duty, and the want of it is of the very essence, as well as the main source, of vice: and this observation applies no less to the doctrinal parts of Scripture, than to its moral precepts, for both are equally revealed by God. Indeed there is no subject upon which more stress is laid in the Scriptures, than the importance of faith. Nor is there any upon which the inspired writers display more solicitude, than the preservation of it from error and heresy. It is even represented by those writers, when at once pure and productive of obedience, as the operative means of salvation. It is made the express condition on which alone those to whom the revelation has been made, can hope to be saved. And surely it ought not to be forgotten that the Christian dispensation, as its fundamental doctrines are explained by our Church, and as they are believed by all Christians who are known under the denomination of orthodox, presents to the mind and to the heart the most powerful and captivating

motives to love as well as to obedience ; that it operates upon our affections and our gratitude by the display of a scheme of Divine goodness and mercy, so marvellous, that, had it not been actually realized, and proved to be so, by indubitable evidence, it would far exceed all credibility ; and that it thus binds us with the cords of love to a most conscientious performance of our duty, in all its parts.

But the doctrinal parts of Scripture, and especially those which are generally considered as most essential, have given rise to differences of opinion, and to controversy : they must therefore be excluded from Mr. Lancaster's plan of religious instruction, the object of which is to instruct youth only in "the *uncontroverted* principles of Christianity." And thus it appears that the system in question is not only philosophically false, inasmuch as it leads to an expectation of Christian obedience without Christian faith, but also essentially immoral, since it would have the effect of bringing up youth as unbelievers, and consequently in habitual "disobedience to the Divine will, which is of the very essence of immorality or sin *."

* See "An Historical View of the Rise and Progress of INFIDELITY, with a Refutation of its Principles and Reasonings, in a Series of Sermons, by the Rev. W. Van Mildert, M. A. Rector of St. Mary-le-Bow, London," vol. ii. p. 192. I cannot

Against a proposal to educate the youth of the country, or any part of it, in such a manner, every serious and considerate person must surely be ready to enter his most formal and solemn protest. The true principle of education is to "train up a child in the way that he should go." The youth, therefore, who are to be trained up according to Mr. Lancaster's system, must be intended to persevere in the way which that system points out. And as Mr. Lancaster expressly says, that the object which he recommends is "the formation of a society under whose immediate patronage all the youth in these kingdoms may be instructed, "his plan, if its execution were to be commensurate with its design, would lead to the extirpation of Christianity from *these kingdoms*, in the place of which would be introduced an anomalous generalizing system of religion, which no existing sect could consent to denominate Christianity. It is

suffer myself to advert to these Sermons without expressing, however feebly, the acknowledgments which, in common with the whole Christian world, I owe to the reverend author, for one of the ablest, most luminous, and most convincing refutations of the principles and reasonings of Infidelity that ever issued from the press. In thus expressing myself I beg leave to be understood, as uttering not merely my own opinion, but what I know to be the opinion of men who are best qualified to judge upon the subject. Earnestly do I wish that every infidel, nay, that every person who entertains any doubt about the great truths of Christianity, would diligently peruse this valuable work.

true, Mr. Lancaster further proposes “to instruct youth to read their Bibles, and to impress on their memories those most essential parts which relate to the history and theory of Christianity.” But he will hardly venture to deny that they stand in much need of assistance to enable them *properly* to “read their Bibles;” in which, we are told, by high authority, there are “many things hard to be understood:” and we have seen that his plan is of such a nature as to exclude the most essential parts of the “theory of Christianity,” and consequently to suppress the true and only efficient motives to the practice of its duties. In a word, he might most aptly have applied to his religious system, by way of motto, that most false and pernicious sentiment,

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

The reason assigned by Mr. Lancaster for the recommendation of such a plan (of the effects of which I should hope he could not be aware) is the supposed necessity of excluding from a system of religious instruction the “peculiar tenets” of every sect of Christians, in order to unite all sects in a society for the instruction, under their joint patronage, of “all the youth in these kingdoms.” The ground of that supposed necessity is, according to Mr. Lancaster, that “it cannot be reason-

ably expected that conscientious men should promote a religious opinion contrary to their own." That ground, however, like all the grounds on which Mr. Lancaster's system is built, is fallacious; for in certain situations, conscientious men may *most reasonably be expected* to promote religious opinions directly contrary to their own, and particularly in the case where, unless they do so, no religious opinions whatever would be promoted. Mr. Lancaster will scarcely deny that any religion is better than none; and if it depended on him, whether in a Mahometan country, the youth should be brought up as Musselmans or as Atheists, I cannot doubt that he would prefer the former, in order to preserve them from the greatest possible evil, that of being educated without any religion at all. In the case before us we find that if the youth to be brought up under the patronage of the proposed society be not instructed in the religious opinions of some one of the denominations of Christians, of which the society is to be composed, they will, in no sense of the word, be taught Christianity. There is therefore no other alternative than either to instruct youth in the religious tenets of some one of those denominations, or to educate them in total ignorance of most of the essentials of the Christian faith: which part of this alternative the society may *reasonably* be expected to prefer, is a question which I trust may safely be referred even to Mr. Lancaster himself.

But another difficulty here presents itself: How shall a society consisting of all sects of Christians determine which of those sects ought to have the preference, in the adoption of its religious tenets as a system of education? How is such a selection to be made? for it must be made if the youth to be instructed are to be educated as Christians. It certainly cannot be expected of any one sect of Christians to admit that the faith of another sect is preferable to its own. The converse of such an admission is; or ought to be, the supposed basis upon which every sect distinctively stands. The difficulty, I own, appears to be insurmountable, if the case be considered as Mr. Lancaster states it. He says, "Mankind are divided into sects;" but this is an illogical distribution, and the whole difficulty arises from its being so. It is of more importance than most people are aware, to arrange and classify our ideas of *genera* and *species* in such a manner as to correspond with the real nature of things. If Mr. Lancaster had pursued this course, he might have saved himself and his readers a great deal of trouble. He would then have found that mankind considered as Christians in this country, which, with regard to the subject in discussion, is the highest *genus*, are in the first place divisible into those who belong to, and those who dissent from the established Church; and that the latter are subdivisible into the various sects of separatists or dissenters from that esta-

blishment. But Mr. Lancaster considers every class or denomination of Christians as a sect, and he most inaccurately applies that appellation to the establishment itself. According to his mode of classification, it is impossible to discover any principle by which the proposed society could be brought to concur in any one system of Christian faith, with a view to the religious instruction of the youth patronized by them. For, considered as sects, the various denominations of Christians stand precisely on the same footing with regard to each other; and it cannot be reasonably expected that they should recognize in any one of them the least title to pre-eminence. But considered as consisting of the established Church, and the various denominations of dissenters, properly called sects, there are very obvious reasons, to which I conceive Mr. Lancaster, unless he avows himself hostile to the Church, must readily subscribe, for assigning to the former such a pre-eminence. It might, indeed, be regarded as a self-evident proposition, that when education is made "*a national concern*," which Mr. Lancaster says, in the present instance, "it ought to become," the youth who partake of its benefits ought to be educated in the *national Church*. Instead, however, of relying on this proposition as a maxim which cannot be controverted, I shall consider it as a principle which ought to be established.

You, Sir, I am persuaded will admit that Mr. Lancaster's system, and indeed any general system of education, ought to be so framed and conducted as to be compatible with the safety of the established Church. Now it is obvious that the strength, and consequently the safety of every establishment must depend upon the numbers that are, upon principle, attached to it. But it would be absurd to expect that youth should, upon principle, be attached to the Church, or, indeed, that they should have any attachment whatever to it, unless they are brought up in it. And as Mr. Lancaster's plan is of the greatest magnitude, extending in its design to the "formation of a society under whose patronage all the youth in these kingdoms may be instructed;" it is undeniable, that, unless it be conducted upon the above principle, it must be fraught with the utmost danger to the Church by bringing up the great mass of the population of this country, without any attachment (to say the least) to that establishment.

Mr. Lancaster seems to be aware of the influence which any general plan of education, favouring a particular system of religion, is calculated, *on that account*, to possess in the state. For he says, "It has been generally conceived, that if any particular sect obtained the principal care in a national system of education, that part would soon be likely to possess the greatest power

and influence in the state. Fear that the clergy should aggrandize themselves too much, has produced opposition from Dissenters to any proposal of the kind ; on the other hand, the clergy have opposed any thing of this nature which might operate with Dissenters, locally or generally, fearing an increase of the dissenting influence might prove likely to prejudice the interests of the establishment *." This is a full recognition, on the part of Mr. Lancaster, of the alternative, that a system of national education, within the scope of which religious instruction is comprised, must tend either to the security or the destruction of the national church. Mr. Lancaster alludes, indeed, to the former part of the alternative, by the illiberal expression, " Fear that the clergy should aggrandize themselves." The question, however, is not, whether our clergy shall aggrandize themselves—of that event, in the present state of society, Heaven knows, there is little danger—but whether the security of the Church shall be consulted. My position is, that, by Mr. Lancaster's system, the Church would be exposed to the most imminent danger ; for unless it be an essential and indispensable part of that system to bring up the youth instructed by it in the Church, there can be no certainty that the case which he describes will not happen, and that a particular sect will not ob-

tain the principal care in the proposed “ national system of education,” in which case he admits that such sect “ will be likely to possess the greatest power and influence in the state,” an event necessarily leading to the subversion of the Church. But if no sect should thus predominate, yet, as the system is now constructed, it would have the effect of bringing up youth without any *attachment* to the Church ; and then, although they might be totally indifferent with regard to “ sects,” and even to religion itself, still the Church would be deprived of that support which is essential to her safety. On these grounds I feel myself authorized to conclude, that whatever degree of “ power and influence in the state” belongs to a system of national education, ought to be thrown into the scale of the national Church, and that this establishment is entitled to all the support which it is capable of deriving from such a system ; not, indeed, with a view to aggrandize the clergy, but to secure the Church against the danger to which it would otherwise inevitably be exposed, from the operation of the system. If the youth of the country be not brought up in the Church, it cannot be expected that they will ever find their way into it. And if some of them should do so, their connexion with it will not be cemented by the strongest of all ties—early attachment. But even of such adventitious adherents, the number would probably be very small. And thus the national Church

would be subjected to the danger which must attend it in that state of society, in which a majority of the population is brought up in separation from it.

If, therefore, Mr. Lancaster's system be really intended to be compatible with the safety of the national Church, it must be made subservient to the propagation of the faith of that Church : and indeed it must be founded on the principle, that *the youth who partake of its benefits must be brought up as members of the establishment.* In Scotland this system is invariably acted upon, and no one ever thinks of deviating from it. In that country the education of the lower classes is a national concern, provided for by legislative authority ; and you, Sir, seem fully sensible of the great national benefits which a due attention to it has produced. But all the children so educated are brought up in the national church, which, there, is *Presbyterian*.

It cannot be justly pretended that the adoption of such a principle would in the least encroach upon parental rights. For the object is to supply the lamentable defects of parental education among the lower classes, the children of which are, as Mr. Lancaster observes, “ left destitute of a suitable education.” The parents of such children are as unqualified to give them a religious, as any other kind of education ; and by far the greater

part of them are, as Mr. Lancaster's experience must have convinced him, totally indifferent respecting the religious education of their offspring. With regard even to the very few who feel any concern upon this subject, and who wish their children to be brought up in a particular persuasion, if they would obtain for them the advantage of charitable instruction, they cannot reasonably expect any deviation, on their account, from the system of religious education which is adopted in the school where that advantage is bestowed. A conformity to such system is a necessary condition, on which alone they can hope to partake of the benefit of a charitable institution for the education of youth. Upon this principle all charity-schools are necessarily conducted, whenever religious instruction is one of their objects. But the above principle is, in the most striking manner, reasonable and necessary with regard to institutions of a *national* kind; in which, as has been shewn, no faith but that of the *national* Church can be taught, without danger to that Church, and consequently to the state. Surely when the important object of supplying the deficiency of "a suitable education" among the lower orders is made a *national* concern, that object ought to be pursued in such a manner, as to be consistent with the general interests of the country, and the safety of its establishments.

And it should not be forgotten, that besides the necessity of adopting, in such a concern, the principle upon which I am insisting, its adoption is necessary, as I trust has been sufficiently shewn, to render a national system of education subservient to the propagation, in any form, of the essential doctrines of Christianity, and consequently of Christianity itself: since, as it cannot reasonably be expected that the peculiar tenets of any sect should be inculcated by a society composed of persons of all religious persuasions, unless such a society consent to inculcate the faith of the established Church, the youth educated under its auspices will not be instructed in any faith at all, and consequently they will not receive a Christian education. If, however, under all these circumstances, an objection should still be made to the principle in question, because it would promote the faith of the established Church, I feel myself authorized to say, that such an objection can only be attributed to that "sect-making spirit" which Mr. Lancaster so severely and so justly censures. I most cordially agree with Mr. Lancaster, that the professors of Christianity should cultivate "a spirit of brotherly love and peace;" but where a national religion is inseparably interwoven with the constitution itself, and particularly when it breathes, as is the case in this country, a most mild and pure spirit of universal toleration, the friends of such an establishment are surely not

chargeable with any want of Christian charity, if, while they secure, by all the means in their power, a full enjoyment of the rights of conscience to all who differ with them, they take the necessary means of securing also their own establishment. On the contrary, if those who dissent from such an establishment, while they enjoy such inestimable privileges, will not cordially assent to whatever is essential to its safety, they only subject themselves to the censure so justly and so forcibly applied by Mr. Lancaster to the “sect-making spirit of party;” and they would do well to imbibe the wish expressed by him, “That the professors of Christianity would cultivate a spirit of unity, brotherly love, and peace; bearing one with another in love; avoiding all differences from party spirit; and, when they cannot unite in religious opinions, *their dissent would be with Christian meekness*, and respect to the opinions of others *.”

Such, however, is the zeal by which sects are generally animated in favour of their own distinctive persuasion, that I fear their general and cordial concurrence in a national system of education, upon the principle which I have shewn to be essential to the safety of the established Church, is an event rather to be desired than expected. I there-

* Introduction, p. 10.

fore think it fortunate, Sir, that the Legislature, through your intervention, is about to take Mr. Lancaster's system out of the hands of the society in which that gentleman proposed to place it. For in the case to which we are now authorized to look forward, the safety of the national Church, we are bound to presume, cannot but be an object of most earnest solicitude. Of that Church the Legislature is a constitutional guardian; and throughout the wide and extensive range of its multifarious and complicated duties, there is not one, I will venture to say, paramount to that of protecting an establishment, which is the hallowed bond of our religious and civil liberties, and the preservation of which involves (as direful experience has proved) the existence of the throne, and the maintenance of the constitution in all its parts. So anxiously has the constitution provided for the security of that establishment, that, in case the two Houses of Parliament should ever forget that it is their bounden duty to protect it, the King cannot, without actual perjury, forget that duty, since he is obliged to swear, in the fundamental contract which he enters into at his coronation, to defend and maintain the Protestant Church, as by law established.

When I had written nearly thus far, I saw a publication, containing a reply on the part of Mr. Lancaster, to the objections which have been urged against his system, under the catching title of "An

Appeal for Justice in the Cause of ten thousand poor and orphan Children, and for the Honour of the Holy Scriptures." In this reply, which is one of the most desultory performances I have ever seen, is contained much illiberal and unfounded censure on two of the most distinguished characters of the present day : the one * an eminent theologian, and a most able champion of the Church ; to whom that establishment is indebted for having, on various occasions, most successfully vindicated her truly apostolical constitution, and her truly orthodox doctrines : the other † a lady of distinguished talents, and, what is far better, of the soundest principles ; who has contributed more than almost any other individual of these times to check the progress of infidelity and vice, and whose correct views of Christian education are particularly deserving of Mr. Lancaster's attention. Mr. Lancaster's main object in this publication seems to be to vindicate himself against the charges brought against him by the above writers, by an appeal to the practice of his school, and a profession of his faith. He endeavours to shew that neither the former nor the latter justifies the charge of favouring a deistical system of education. But the true question in issue relates neither to Mr. Lancaster's practice,

* Rev. Charles Daubeney, Archdeacon of Sarum.

† Mrs. Trimmer, author of the *Guardian of Education*, and of many other valuable works.

nor his particular belief, but merely to the system of education which he recommends to the nation. This, as I trust I have satisfactorily shewn, is in substance a deistical system ; at least it certainly is not a Christian one. If his practice be not conformable with it, that circumstance evinces his own inconsistency, and thereby furnishes a conclusive argument against his system, by proving that upon experiment he found it not fit for practice. In such a case he surely ought to have taken the earliest opportunity of publicly renouncing it, and of acknowledging his error. But instead of doing this, he publishes edition after edition of his original work, in each of which his pernicious theory is repeated ; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that at the end of the sixth edition, from which the passages here cited are extracted, appears an advertisement of his “ Appeal to Justice,” which of course must have been published previously to the edition in question. Thus does he at the same time persist in promulgating an *antichristian theory*, while he endeavours to vindicate himself from the charges which, *on that very account*, had been brought against him, by pleading that his *practice* and his *faith* are *Christian*. What is this but blowing hot and cold with the same mouth ? Let it not, however, be supposed that the *practice* in his school, with regard to religious instruction, comes up to that standard which, for the reasons above stated, can alone be permitted to regulate a system of na-

tional education *. It is far from sufficient for the purpose of instructing youth in the faith of the Church. Mr. Lancaster intimates, indeed, that the Apostles' Creed, with the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, are received in his school. But the Church has other creeds besides that of the Apostles ; she has also a Catechism : and these, though the learning of them is excluded from Mr. Lancaster's *practical* system, must, I conceive, be taught where education is carried on as a *national concern*. I am sorry to see in this publication of Mr. Lancaster some very malignant and indecent sneers against one of the creeds of the Church (the Athanasian), on account of what are called its damnatory clauses ; which at the same time he misrepresents, by applying the penalty expressed in those clauses to the *not comprehending or believing the whole of the creed*. For what appears to me a most satisfactory explanation of the clauses in question, and one calculated to remove all the objections which have ever been

* What such a system ought to be, in regard to religious instruction, may be seen by referring to a publication entitled, "A new and appropriate System of Education for the labouring People, elucidated and explained according to the Plan which has been established for the religious and moral Instruction of male and female Children admitted into the Free-school, No. 19, Orchard Street, Westminster, &c." By P. Colquhoun, L.L.D.

urged against them, I refer Mr. Lancaster to the Orthodox Churchman's Magazine, for February 1807.

But turning from a theory so pernicious, and a practice so defective, let us look forward with pleasing confidence to the protection which, it cannot be doubted, the Legislature is about to afford the Church against the danger, to which she was exposed by the inconsiderate benevolence of Mr. Lancaster and his supporters. I trust, Sir, that effectual means will now be taken to secure the full operation of the principle, the necessity of an invariable adherence to which has, I flatter myself, been sufficiently proved; that *when education is made a national concern, youth must be brought up as members of the national Church.* The necessity of a strict adherence to this principle is, at present, the more urgent, on account of the alarming success with which a wild and fanatical spirit is endeavouring, by the grossest abuse of toleration, to draw away the lower classes of the community from the established Church. The genuine spirit of toleration consists in a full allowance, by the supreme authority in the state, to all persons of whatever religious persuasion, to worship their Maker according to the dictates of their own conscience: but the most complete enjoyment of this allowance does not require that

persons, however unqualified, should be permitted to exercise the important functions of preachers and teachers. By the Toleration Act, 1 W. and M. c. 18, the magistrates are bound to license all persons who apply to them at the quarter sessions, for permission to exercise those functions. The consequence is, that many illiterate persons, in the very lowest stations of life, some of whom cannot even write their names, are so licensed; and they not only, by their fanatical rant, seduce great numbers from the Church, and from every other place of worship where sense accompanies devotion; but also, by their mischievous superstition, they not unfrequently drive their deluded followers to desperation, insanity, and even suicide. This evil has of late years been rapidly increasing, and to check its progress is an object which demands the serious consideration of the Legislature. As the abuse of whatever is excellent tends to its destruction, every true friend of toleration must be anxious to see so gross and mischievous an abuse of it, restrained by efficient remedies. What remedies should be applied for that purpose, this is not the place to inquire. It may not, however, be useless even here to observe that one of the most operative causes of the evil complained of is *itinerancy*. For the discourses of most of those rhapsodists, who, by their vehemence and vociferation, draw together immense numbers, and estrange a large proportion

not only of the lower, but even of the middle orders, from the established Church, are so frothy, so extravagantly wild and absurd, and at the same time so destitute of variety and comprehension, that the uniform nonsense of a single preacher could not keep together a congregation for six weeks in any one place. Care is therefore taken, by an incessant change of these illiterate declaimers, to gratify the idle curiosity of their deluded followers with novelty of face and of gesticulation. This statement obviously suggests the expediency, and, indeed, the necessity of imposing some restraints upon itinerancy, by restricting licensed preachers to particular congregations. This could not be considered as an hardship, since it would only place such preachers with regard to the exercise of their functions, upon the same footing with the ministers of the established Church, and, indeed, with all *educated* ministers who officiate out of the Church. The right of conscience would in no respect be violated by a legislative requisition, that each congregation should have its regular officiating minister, who should be required to make it appear, by proper testimonials, that he is desired to fill that station before he be permitted to assume it. And if, in addition, some evidence were required of a suitable education, and of a good moral character, before any one be permitted to become a religious instructor; such a regulation would evidently be for the benefit of those who are instructed, without any infringement upon the right of toleration.

It ought also to be remembered that the usefulness of the Church is greatly circumscribed, because care has not been taken to make the establishment keep pace with the population of the country. The latter has increased in an astonishing degree, with scarcely any increase in the number of churches belonging to the former. The surplus population, which, in many places, cannot be accommodated at church (where, indeed, the accommodation of the lower orders is, alas! but little consulted), must be expected, if there exist any sense of religion, to attend irregular places of worship. To supply this lamentable deficiency no mode would, perhaps, be at once so safe and so efficacious, as the erection, under the superintendence of the Bishop of the diocese, of free churches, upon the model of that called Christ Church, at Bath; the whole area of which is allotted to the reception gratis of the lower orders, and which has the happiest effects in drawing away multitudes of that description from the empty and unprofitable declamation of fanatics. By the building of churches of this description, wherever they are wanted, a most effectual step would be taken, at once to promote the genuine influence of religion, and to attach the mass of the people to the established Church.

This discussion will not, I trust, be considered as entirely digressive; as the subject,

to which it relates, is here introduced for the purpose of shewing that the dangers to which the Church is exposed by the spread of fanaticism, impose the necessity of a steady adherence to the principle which I have endeavoured to establish, with respect to national education, in the great measure to which you, Sir, are now engaged.

But the actual state of Ireland furnishes a still more cogent reason for a steady adherence to this principle. In that country, the Church, though it has long been in an alarming state of inferiority and weakness, with regard to the proportionate number of her adherents, is daily losing ground, and declining. Popery has there of late years increased, and it is still increasing, in a manner of which few persons have any suspicion. I am told by a gentleman who has taken incredible pains to inform himself, by means of personal observation, on this interesting subject, that the Protestants, who in the year 1731 constituted more than one third of the population of Ireland, do not now amount to one fifth *; in which are included a considerable number who dissent from the established Church. On the other hand, the Romanists, who are to the Protestants collectively more than four to one, and whose relative num-

* For a more detailed statement of the information which I have thus received respecting the growth of Popery in Ireland, see the Postscript.

bers are constantly increasing, by means of those arts of proselytism which they have ever been so prone to exercise, are systematically endeavouring, with all the aid which they can derive from numbers, union, zeal, and confidence, to get rid of all the restrictions and disabilities, by which they are excluded from a full and complete participation of power with the members of the Protestant establishment. Such is the real object of those claims to which is most insidiously applied the term, Catholic Emancipation; a term expressive of as gross a falsehood as language is capable of conveying, since it intimates that millions of persons, on each of whom has descended the inestimable inheritance of British liberty, stand in need of emancipation.

It is admitted by some of the most zealous advocates for the allowance of such claims, that the restrictions and disabilities, which it is their wish to remove, were necessary for the protection of the Church, and the quiet of the State, at the time when they were imposed. But it is urged in favour of their removal, that they have ceased to be necessary for that purpose, in consequence of the great change which has since taken place in Popery. Admitting, however, that this religion is materially different from what it once was, in regard to those qualities by which it became an instrument of such extensive mischief, and that its professors

have renounced the obnoxious tenets and principles which rendered it essentially hostile to both civil and religious rights ; admitting all this, still those professors are in a state of separation from the established Church ; and therefore they cannot, with safety to that Church, be admitted to a full participation of power with those who belong to it. If the axiom, on which I have so much insisted, be entitled to that appellation—that the strength, and, consequently, the safety of every establishment, depend chiefly on the relative number of those who are attached to it ;—it necessarily follows that, in proportion to the number of those who dissent from a religious establishment, such an establishment must be weak and insecure. The mere circumstance of separation necessarily subjects it to danger ; for in proportion as the separatists from it are numerous, the number of those on whom alone it can rely for support, must be small, while that of those who have no interest in its preservation, and who are generally apt to suppose that they have an interest in its overthrow, must be formidable. When this is the case, the perception of numbers inspires a consciousness of strength, and encourages a hope for that pre-eminence, which sects always view with jealousy in an establishment, and which, on all occasions that produce division, and especially when religion is concerned, mankind are desirous of attaining. But when the strength which is de-

rived from numbers is accompanied with the possession of power, the temptation to use that power for the advancement of those who possess it, may fairly be presumed to be irresistible; and it would denote the grossest ignorance of human nature to doubt that they will employ it, in its fullest extent, for that purpose: if they neglected to do so, they would cease to be men. But when, as is now the case in Ireland, a vast majority of the inhabitants of a country are in a state of separation from the established Church, and when, moreover, they are firmly united in a sect, be it what it may; to assert that such a majority may, with safety to that Church, be admitted to a full and complete participation of power, in common with its members, is to advance one of the most extravagant propositions that can possibly be presented to the notice of the human understanding. I confidently defy the most expert reasoner now alive, to reconcile such a proposition with common sense. Such, however, is the absurdity in which the advocates for the claims of the Irish Romanists involve themselves. It is not, therefore, because those formidable claimants are of a particular religion, but because they are not of the *established* religion, that their claims are inadmissible. And I beg it may be remembered, that the question is found to be susceptible of a most satisfactory solution on the ground of admission, that Popery has really undergone the change which is attributed to

it. But who that remembers what Popery once was, can, in investing it with power, be free from alarm, lest its metamorphosis may not be quite so complete as has been supposed—lest it should hereafter resume somewhat of its former character? In one respect it still retains, even in the country where its pretensions are so high, a quality, which is well calculated to excite the apprehensions of every friend of social order. The essential nature of the religion bestows on its priests an ascendancy over the minds of the ignorant and countless multitude, which is subversive of the legitimate authority of government. That ascendancy constitutes what may most properly be termed—*imperium in imperio*. It produces a state of vassalage and dependence, no less hostile to civil freedom, than destructive of the ties which unite subjects to government. It is incompatible with the safety of the state, collectively, and of the individuals who profess the Protestant faith. It even carries with it a power of life and death—for it is supported by the right of excommunication, a sentence which exposes the unhappy victim to perish for want of subsistence, which, in such a case, not a single Romanist can safely, or even conscientiously, bestow.

It is also a most important circumstance, in the case of the Irish Romanists, and should never be lost sight of in a discussion of their claims, that they

consider themselves entitled to a very large portion of the landed property of Ireland, of which they have at different times been deprived by forfeiture, and the right to which, though lawfully vested in other proprietors, they consider as descending in their families from generation to generation, in the hope that the time will arrive when it may successfully be asserted.

It having been shewn that the claims of the Irish Romanists are incompatible with the safety of the established Church, and, consequently, with that of the constitution itself, of which that Church is an essential and an inseparable part, it follows that they are not only inadmissible, but also, in the highest degree, unreasonable; for as their object is nothing else than to relieve the persons in whose favour they are urged, from certain disabilities and restrictions which are imposed upon them for the general good, to insist upon them amounts to nothing less than a demand that partial interests shall be preferred to the welfare of the community, and, indeed, that the latter shall be sacrificed to the former. If such a sacrifice were even solicited as a boon, the request would clearly be most unreasonable—but the claim is advanced as an indefeasible right; and it is even urged with such pertinacity, that some persons are induced to favour the grant, lest a refusal should lead to another rebellion.

But, independently of every other consideration, would it not be madness to arm with power that disposition, which, it is feared, may be prompted to rebel by the refusal of concessions, that cannot be made consistently with the public safety? Other persons, abstaining from the argument *in terrorem*, content themselves with urging the expediency of conceding what is thus demanded, for the purpose of quieting the minds of the Irish Romanists, and with a view to conciliation. But the ill success which has attended past attempts at conciliation, by means of concession, far from encouraging a repetition of the experiment, authorizes the conclusion that the concession of what remains to be granted, instead of producing a conciliatory effect, would serve only to encourage the hope of attaining—while it would furnish the means of pursuing—what then will alone remain to be obtained—the establishment of the Roman Church in Ireland. And with regard to the quieting of the minds of the Romanists, I should conceive that, in point both of justice and sound policy, it is at least as desirable to quiet the minds of the members of the established Church, who have certainly much cause for disquietude and alarm, and who, on the most solid grounds, apprehend the utmost danger to their establishment, from a removal of those barriers which their ancestors established for its protection. And it ought not to be forgotten, that all which such persons desire is, that the law should continue

as it is, while the others ask, not only for an alteration of the law, but for a fundamental change in the constitution itself.

It is sometimes urged in favour of the claims in question, that, in consequence of the extent of past concessions, what remains to be conceded is comparatively little. What is this but to urge, that, because the fortifications of a city have been abandoned, the citadel should also be given up? I am ready to admit that the extent of past concessions renders it more difficult to defend what remains, and that a considerable degree of embarrassment in our situation is hereby produced. But this embarrassment serves only to confirm a truth, of which history furnishes so many lamentable proofs, that it is never safe to deviate from principles for the sake of expediency. For though, abstractedly, no inconvenience be produced by such deviation, the sacredness of the principle is violated: and the mischief is the greater, because no immediate evil ensues, or is likely to ensue; for thereby mankind are induced to think that the principle may be violated with impunity. An occasional relaxation of principle is further mischievous, because it tends to unsettle the minds of men. Those who are really interested in maintaining the principle, know not how to think, or how to act; they have no settled rule to enable them to judge how far they may go; while those who wish to subvert it are emboldened by every deviation, however minute, to hope ulti-

mately to triumph over the principle itself. Every refusal to give it up then seems to them unreasonably harsh and rigid, because they have been taught that it is not inviolable. It is, therefore, much better, as well for those upon whom it operates as a restriction, as for others, that it should be considered as a barrier that can never be passed. They then the more readily acquiesce in the restriction, and, instead of being encouraged to wish for what the safety of the state requires to be put beyond their reach, they set themselves quietly to enjoy the advantages which they possess, and the security of which, in the case before us, is enhanced by the restrictions to which they are subjected.

Thus it appears that the true cause of the embarrassment under which we now labour, with regard to the claims of the Irish Romanists, and of the danger which we apprehend from their disposition to persist so pertinaciously in those claims, is to be found in the concessions which have been made to them from time to time. If the Legislature had contented itself with relieving them from all penalties on account of religion, and, securing to them full toleration, had firmly stood on the constitutional ground of the test laws, our situation would, there is abundant reason to conclude, have been most enviable in comparison with what it now is. In that case the Romanists themselves, knowing that they had no chance of obtaining an

admission to power, would naturally have endeavoured to reconcile themselves to an exclusion from it; and instead of insisting, as they now do, to be put upon an equal footing in all respects with the members of the establishment, they would have discovered and prized the inestimable privileges which they actually enjoy, and which are secured to them by the very disabilities of which they complain.

But the embarrassment which we experience in consequence of having conceded so much, should enhance, in our estimation, the value of what still remains; as, with the destruction of some of the Sibyl's books, the price of the remainder was increased. It is high time, at length, to make a stand, and to convince the Irish Romanists, that, while their religious and civil rights are securely protected, the sacred barriers of the constitution must no further be encroached upon. Instead of inflaming their hopes, as has lately been done, by attempts at further concession, the wise statesman will endeavour, by all fair and honourable means, to strengthen the Protestant establishment. For that purpose he will labour to ascertain the causes which have impeded the progress of the principles of the Reformation in Ireland, and to remove the obstacles which are still in their way; and, instead of depriving the national Church of any of its remaining bulwarks, he will thus provide for its more complete security, by an extension of its worship,

and a diffusion of its mild and tolerant spirit. Such a system of conduct will be found much better calculated to civilize the lower classes of our Irish fellow-subjects, to ameliorate their condition, and to produce general harmony and strength, than the rash and empirical experiment of conceding what is far less likely to afford satisfaction, than to enlarge expectation, and to invite demands, which, unless we sacrifice the very existence of our Church, as an establishment, must be rejected, and the rejection of which will excite discontents, far more formidable, *as they will be accompanied with power*, than any which now exist.

Such, I trust, Sir, is the system which our statesmen, impelled by principle, and taught by experience, will hereafter pursue, with regard to Ireland. Nay, I do not hesitate to say, that an inflexible determination to pursue that system, and to oppose claims which are incompatible with the safety of the Church, ought to be considered as an indispensable qualification for a British Minister. A difference between the King and his Ministers, on a subject of this major importance, is an anomaly in government, which should never be permitted to recur. The Sovereign should never again be reduced to the painful necessity of appealing to his Coronation oath, against a measure brought forward in Parliament by his own Ministers. His paternal heart, which would rejoice to diffuse satisfaction through every part of his empire, should

never again be reduced to the distressing necessity of resisting the wishes of a part of his people, for the sake of the whole—for the maintenance of those establishments, in Church and State, which it is his first duty to protect. He should never again be obliged to stand alone, until the sense of the country can be declared—as it now unquestionably is, and as, I hope, it soon will be in a more solemn manner, by the warmest assurances of gratitude and support—as a guardian of our national religion; as a defender of that Church, which, by an express, original, and fundamental compact, enforced by the sanctions of religion, as well as by implied obligation, inseparably attached to the royal character, he is pledged to maintain. It cannot be supposed that a Sovereign of these realms will ever be unmindful of these accumulated obligations; it ought, nevertheless, to fill our hearts with gratitude to Divine Providence, to reflect, that, at the critical period which we have recently witnessed, so conscientious, so enlightened, and so firm a defender of the Church, was seated on the Throne.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

JOHN BOWLES.

Bath,
March 23, 1807.

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of treating the wishes of a part of his people for
the sake of the whole—for the maintenance of
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JOHN BOWEN

POSTSCRIPT.

MUCH uncertainty exists respecting the actual population of Ireland, and the relative numbers of the Protestants and Romanists in that country. All persons, however, agree that the latter constitute an immense majority of that population; a fact which, whether the majority be greater or less, affords, I conceive, a solid foundation for the reasoning which is built upon it in the foregoing pages. It may not be amiss, however, to subjoin to this Tract the result of a communication which I have received from an intelligent friend, resident in Ireland, respecting the state of the population, and the increase of Popery in that country; together with his opinion as to the causes which have led to such increase, and the means by which so great an evil may most effectually be checked. The calculations of my friend are, I understand, founded in a great measure on the publication entitled, "A Statistical and Historical Inquiry into the Progress and Magnitude of the Population of Ireland, by Thomas Newenham, Esq."

Population of Ireland in 1731	- -	2,010,221
Ditto in 1805	- - - - -	5,395,456
Number of Romanists in 1731, according to a return made to the House of Lords	- - - - -	1,309,768
Number of Protestants at the same period, as per return	- - - - -	700,452
Number of Romanists in 1805	- -	4,300,000
Number of Protestants at the same period	- - - - -	1,080,000
Increase of Romanists from 1731 to 1805	- - - - -	2,990,240
Ditto of Protestants during the same interval	- - - - -	379,548

Thus it appears, that in 1731 the Romanists were to the Protestants not quite in the proportion of two to one; and that in 1805 the former were to the latter in the proportion of more than four to one. Secondly, That from 1731 to 1805; the population had more than doubled; that its positive increase during that interval was 3,385,235; and that the increase of the Romanists in comparison with that of the Protestants, has been in the proportion of more than seven to one.

This truly alarming decline of Protestantism is owing to the great exertions of the Popish

priests and their agents in making proselytes, and the gross ignorance of the lower orders, which exposes them to be easily perverted; to the zeal with which Popery is encouraged and promoted by all its adherents, who possess any power or influence—while, comparatively, little or no exertion is made on the other side; to the great increase of Popish places of worship in counties and towns, where splendid Chapels are erected, while the Protestant Churches are suffered to fall to decay; and to the want of Protestant schoolmasters, and the abundance of those of the Popish persuasion, who are perpetually perverting the Protestant children.

It is obvious that the proper remedies for the evil would be the building and maintaining of Protestant Churches, together with means to secure the residence of the clergy; the establishment of Protestant seminaries; and the circulation of Bibles, Testaments, and tracts against Popery. The people are extremely eager to obtain Bibles and Testaments, while the priests, adhering to their ancient arts of delusion, are as vigilant and active in preventing them from acquiring such means of information. Accordingly, in the South, there is scarcely a Bible in five hundred Popish families.

If such means were adequately resorted to, there is reason to hope that the Protestant religion, which is the strength and security of a Protestant government, would gradually obtain an increasing influence, without affording any just cause of complaint to the Romanists, and without the least symptom of intolerance.

It was foreign from the design of the foregoing Letter to enter into any examination of the measure which has led to a dismissal of the late Ministers from His Majesty's executive councils. Some observations, however, upon that measure, will not, I trust, be deemed irrelevant, even with regard to my principal subject, as both are closely connected with so important an interest in this country, as the safety of its established Church.

The real object of the proposed measure, when it assumed the form of a Bill, was to conciliate the Irish Romanists, by relieving them from every remaining restriction of a military nature, and rendering them admissible to the highest ranks in the army and navy. I say this was its real object; for though it contained an extension of the Act of 1793 to Great Britain, that extension

having been actually promised (whether wisely or not, it is not my present business to inquire), it could not have met with any considerable difficulty, had it been brought forward as a distinct, rather than a subordinate measure. It is true the measure also extended to an admission of the Dissenters of this country, of every description, to the same privileges which it was proposed to confer on the Irish Romanists; but it is obvious that those Dissenters would not have been thought of, on their own account, and that their interests were attended to merely to facilitate the passing of the Bill. With regard to the provision for securing to the soldiers and sailors who dissent from the established worship, the free exercise of their religious opinions, *that right is already fully enjoyed*, and therefore a legislative provision for it was quite unnecessary.

Considering, therefore, the measure as having for its real object the opening of the highest military ranks to the Irish Romanists, it cannot be viewed in any other light than as a *direct* concession of the most objectionable of what are called the *Catholic claims*, and as an *implied* concession of the whole of those claims, by a dereliction of the principle upon which alone they can be resisted. Those claims amount to a demand of admissibility to all situations of power and trust, *civil* and *mili-*

tary, in the British empire. In both respects they are incompatible with the safety of our ecclesiastical establishment, because, on the principles already laid down, the possession of power, whether civil or military, by so numerous a body of separatists from the established Church, must, in the nature of things, be fraught with danger to that establishment. But it is obvious that greater danger would be produced by the grant of *military*, than of *civil* power, to such a body. For the exercise of the latter may be checked and counteracted, though not without much difficulty and incessant vigilance, by a Parliament composed chiefly of Protestants; but it requires no great exertion of fancy to suppose a case in which a General of the Romish persuasion, possessing the command of an army in Ireland, might have, not only the Protestant Church, but the Protestant government itself, in his power. Would the Protestants in such a case think any of their establishments safe, even on the supposition, which I am ready to admit, that at present the Romanists intend nothing hostile to those establishments? Nor should it be forgotten, that when, for the purpose of conciliation, the Romanists are put on the same footing as the Protestants with regard to military rank, that purpose will be defeated if they should be, or even conceive themselves to be (which they will be very apt to do), objects of jealousy or apprehension,

The most solid proofs must be given that they are thought deserving of unlimited trust and confidence; and the slightest doubt upon this subject, however unfounded, may produce a flame which it will not be easy to stifle.

But besides the strong and insurmountable objection to which, in the case supposed, the grant of military power, distinctly considered, is liable, it should be remembered that such a grant would have led to the necessity of conceding those claims which it was proposed for the present to withhold; and that, therefore, the measure in question really involved an acquiescence in all the demands of the Irish Romanists, in their utmost extent. For it is well known that those claimants would not have been satisfied with the concessions contained in the Bill lately before the House of Commons, and that they demand to be placed on the same footing, in all respects, with the members of the established Church—a demand, the principle of which could not be fully satisfied, unless their Bishops shared, with the Protestant Bishops, a right to sit in the House of Lords. Without, however, attributing to them, *at present*, so extensive a view, it is evident, from the *indisputable* extent of their claims, that the object of conciliation, even if the late Bill had passed, would have failed *in limine*; and that the persons for whose satisfaction it was intended, would only have been encouraged, by such *partial*

success, to require a full compliance with their wishes. But in making this requisition they would have appeared in a new, and a most formidable character. They would have been in possession of military power. They would have taken their stand on their acknowledged right of admissibility to the highest ranks in the army and navy. They would, in short, as has been most justly observed *, *have been in possession of the sword*. Whether it would then have been safe to refuse them any thing which would have been necessary to quiet their minds, or whether such refusal would not rather have been attended with more danger than ever, are considerations well deserving the attention of those persons who are desirous of granting them *the sword*, for the purpose of conciliation. Thus is that weak and temporizing policy, which, in order to get rid of present difficulties, makes a sacrifice of permanent principles, sure to defeat its own object, and to produce an increase, rather than a diminution, of difficulty and danger.

To justify a concession of so alarming a nature, it has been urged, that the state of Ireland rendered it a necessary defence against invasion; and a Noble Lord † is reported to have argued in its favour, that *its object was not to invade, but to secure the establishments of the empire; and that if Ireland were rendered insecure, the establishments of*

* By Lord Hawkesbury.

† Lord Viscount Howick.

*England would be exposed to greater danger than any which could possibly result from such a boon to the Catholics**. Another Noble Lord † is reported to have contended, that, *in the prospect of a peace between France and the Continent, and a continuance of the war with England, the boon would be necessary, in order to conciliate and engage the population of Ireland in the defence of the empire.* That is to say, it cannot be denied that the boon would be productive of danger to our ecclesiastical establishment, but this danger must be incurred for the security of the state against perils from without. Indeed, the mere resorting, in such a case, to an argument founded on general

* It is remarkable, that in the discussions which have taken place on the subject under consideration, the term Catholics should have been so generally applied to the description of persons whose claims have produced those discussions. The application of that term to the Romanists amounts to nothing less than an admission that they constitute, exclusively, *the universal Church of Christ*, and that the Protestants form no part of that Church. That, by the assumption of the term, the former should endeavour to inculcate such a doctrine, proves only that there are no bounds to the exorbitancy of their claims; but that the latter should recognise a claim of this description, which they do whenever they denominate the members of the Romish Church *Catholics*, is a proof of inconsideration, or rather of folly, which scarcely admits of an adequate description. These reasons have induced me to use the term Romanists throughout this publication. A correct use of terms of denomination is of more importance to the cause of truth than is generally supposed.

† Lord Grenville.

policy, is a clear though tacit admission, that the Church has something to apprehend from the proposed concession. If it could be shewn that such a concession is compatible with the safety of the Church, all difficulty would vanish, and it would be quite unnecessary to argue the question on the grounds of general security. For while, on the one hand, no individuals have a right to complain of any restrictions to which it is necessary they should be subject for the general good; so, on the other, no restrictions ought to exist in a state unless they are conducive to that object. If, therefore, it could be shewn that the restrictions in question are not necessary for the safety of the Church, which is the true reason of their being created, it would follow of course that they ought to be removed; and men of the first-rate talents, with so conclusive an argument for the removal in their power, would not reason on the ground of general policy. It behoves those persons, however, who contend that the Church must be exposed to danger, for the sake of the State, seriously to consider what would become of the State without the Church. At all events, I conceive it will not be denied, that, in order to justify an exposure of the Church for the safety of the State, both the urgency and the efficiency of the measure which is proposed for that purpose, should be most evident, and that its adoption ought to appear to be a matter of paramount necessity, admitting, in all

human probability, of no other alternative than that of partial or total ruin: as in the case of a man who has no other means of saving his own life, than by pushing his fellow-creature into the water from a plank which is unable to save both. Thus, before we resolve to push the Church into the water, we should be fully convinced that the State, such as it will remain when dissociated from the Church, has no other means of preservation than by resorting to such an extremity. It happens, however, that no such necessity exists. We have repelled the dangers of invasion, when they were much more formidable than they are now, or than, I trust, they will ever be again, without conciliating the Romanists at the expense of the Church. Experience, therefore, tends to prove that there is no urgency for so desperate a measure as that which is now proposed for our adoption. But in what a light does the proposal exhibit those in whose favour it is made? For it is founded upon the supposition that four millions of His Majesty's subjects, who are already admissible to all ranks in the army below that of staff officers, a rank which very few individuals among them can ever hope to attain, and from which they are excluded for the sake of the public welfare, cannot be prevailed on to stand forward in the defence of their King and country, unless such a restriction be removed. If this be not a libel on the Irish Romanists, I think it furnishes a conclu-

sive argument against the recognition of their claim to a full participation of power with their Protestant fellow-subjects.

It is not a little calculated to excite surprise, that the question before us, as it relates to the Coronation oath, should have been argued so much on the ground of that respectful and loyal deference to the scruples of the King's conscience, which is undoubtedly due from all his subjects, and of a laudable desire to consult His Majesty's *personal ease and comfort*; as if it were really one of those nice questions of casuistry, on which conscientious men may think and feel differently. But the reverse of this, unless the principles which I have endeavoured to establish can be overthrown, is so clearly the case, that it seems impossible for any mind that is not enslaved by prejudice, to entertain a doubt upon the subject. So confident, indeed, do I feel of the impregnable strength of those principles, that I defy the most strenuous advocate for the claims of the Irish Romanists to controvert the proposition—that a compliance with those claims would be incompatible with the safety of the established Church; and unless this proposition can be successfully controverted, it leads unavoidably to the conclusion that *the King's assent to those claims would be a violation of the Coronation oath*. If, therefore, any measure involving a recognition of those claims, either in

part or the whole, and especially in so important a part of them as the grant of military power, had been brought forward in Parliament by a member not holding an official situation, it would, I conceive, have been the indispensable duty of the servants of the Crown, besides opposing such a measure for the sake of the Church, to state, as a conclusive reason for its rejection, that it was at variance with the oath which their Royal Master had taken at his coronation ; and if such a representation had failed to produce its proper effect (a supposition not compatible with the respect due to Parliament), they should then have approached the Throne with their dutiful advice, to exercise its undoubted prerogative, by refusing its assent to a Bill which contained so flagrant an attack on the conscience of their Sovereign. As my object in taking up my pen was by no means of a personal or party nature, I refrain from animadverting more directly on the conduct of the late Ministers, on the occasion which has properly excited so deep and universal an interest. But I must be allowed the liberty of observing, that the reserve which those Ministers claimed, and which has more immediately led to their dismissal, appears to me in no other light than the reservation of a right to advise His Majesty, at any future time, to dispense with the sacred obligations which are imposed upon him by his Coronation oath.

Let us hope, Sir, that this important question will not be again argued on grounds which imply any doubt of the propriety of those scruples by which the Royal Mind has been actuated on a late occasion. That those scruples are entitled to the utmost respect, and that the firmness of His Majesty in acting up to them deserves the highest admiration, are truths which no one ventures to dispute; but it is no less indisputable, that the judgment of our beloved Sovereign on this occasion, was as correct, as his conduct was firm, or his mind conscientious; and that, in resisting the claims which have been so unwarrantably pressed upon him, he has afforded a most *seasonable* support to the established Church, and, thereby, has nobly sustained the exalted character of—**DEFENDER OF THE PROTESTANT FAITH.**

March 31, 1807.

THE END.

CORRECTIONS.

Page 41, 8th line from bottom, between "therefore," and "because," insert "so much."—Next line but one dele "but," and substitute "as."

Page 42, line 11, for "ascendency," read "ascendancy."—4th line afterwards, the same alteration.

Page 48, 6th line from bottom, for "reduced to the painful duty," read, "subjected to the painful necessity."

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&c. &c.

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